

## Teaching the Book

*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, based on Mark Twain's recollections of his Missouri boyhood, is a timeless classic that continues to captivate new generations of readers. The book gives students the opportunity to explore Twain's themes, his use of language, and his memorable characters. Activities engage students in analyzing a famous Twain quote, researching Twain's life, and creating a table of contents for their own adventures.

**Theme Focus:** Classic Novel

**Comprehension Focus:** Theme

**Language Focus:** Words of Adventure

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in 1835 and grew up in the small town of Hannibal on the Mississippi River. Clemens took on the pseudonym of Mark Twain after he worked as a riverboat pilot on the Mississippi and began to write about the colorful characters he met on his travels in the West and abroad. However, Twain's most enduring works—*Huckleberry Finn* and *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*—sprang from his own childhood adventures in small town America.

Twain's writing, often considered humorous and entertaining, was in fact full of social criticism. Twain tackled the big issues of the day, such as racism and economic injustices, using humor to get his ideas across. Mark Twain became one of the most famous Americans of his day, known for his essays, novels, stories, and lectures. After a series of misfortunes, both personal and economic, he died at age 74 on April 21, 1910.

For more information about Mark Twain, visit: <http://to.pbs.org/UoDiLL> or <http://bit.ly/W7gjWR>.

## BOOK STATS

**Grade Level Equivalent:** 7–12

**Ages:** 13+

**Lexile Measure®:** 950L

**Pages:** 224

**Genre:** Classic Novel

**Guided Reading Level:** Z

**Subject/Theme:** Moral Growth, Conflict Between Youth and Adulthood, Conflict Between Freedom and Society

Common Core Standards	Reading	Writing	Listening & Speaking	Language
Grade 7	RL.7.1, RL.7.2, RL.7.2, RL.7.4	W.7.1, W.7.7	SL.7.1, SL.7.4	L.7.4, L.7.6
Grade 8	RL.8.1, RL.8.2, RL.8.3, RL.8.4	W.8.1, W.8.7	SL.8.1, SL.8.4	L.8.4, L.8.6
Grade 9-10	RL.9-10.1, RL.9-10.2, RL.9-10.3, RL.9-10.4	W.9-10.1, W.9-10.7	SL.9-10.1, SL.9-10.4	L.8.4, L.8.6
Grade 11-12	RL.11-12.1, RL.11-12.2, RL.11-12.3, RL.11-12.4	W.11-12.1, W.11-12.7	SL.11-12.1, SL.11-12.4	L.11-12.4, L.11-12.6

## OVERVIEW

### Book Summary

When the reader meets Tom Sawyer, he is making mischief—including fooling his friends into white-washing Aunt Polly's fence. Tom does this while also endearing himself to almost everyone, including the beautiful new girl in town, Becky Thatcher. However, Tom's life becomes more complicated when he and Huck Finn witness a murder in the graveyard—and then watch as the wrong person is accused.

Tom continues to waver between childhood freedom and moral responsibility. He runs away with Huck and Joe Harper to camp out and play pirates in the wild; when he returns home several days later, he walks in on his own funeral. Tom shows his noble side when he takes Becky's punishment for a wrong committed against the schoolmaster. And after much soul-searching, he tells the truth at the murder trial about the real killer in the graveyard.

The various threads of the book's plot come together in the concluding chapters. Tom and Becky become lost for days in a cave and are finally rescued through Tom's ingenuity and courage. Later, Injun Joe is found dead in the cave, and Huck and Tom discover his fortune in buried treasure. When the two boys become wealthy heroes, they reluctantly face the prospect of becoming civilized—but not without swearing to continue their adventures in the future.

# Get Ready to Read

## Pre-Reading Activities

**Advice to Youth** Introduce students to Mark Twain by projecting the following quote from his “Advice to Youth” speech on a whiteboard or screen.

“Always obey your parents. When they are present. This is the best policy in the long run. Because if you don’t, they will make you. Most parents think they know better than you do, and you can generally make more by humoring that superstition than you can by acting on your own better judgment.”

—Mark Twain

Ask students what the quote reveals about Mark Twain’s opinions of young people and adults. Also ask what it reveals about his sense of humor and style of writing.

**The Real Tom Sawyer** In his preface to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Mark Twain writes: “Most of the adventures recorded in this book really occurred; one or two were experiences of my own, the rest those of boys who were schoolmates of mine.” Encourage students to learn more about Twain’s childhood by viewing “Tom Sawyer Days,” an interactive scrapbook of his early life at: <http://to.pbs.org/TIJZtH>.



## BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Ask students to think about this question as they read. Write the question on chart paper or the whiteboard.

**Will Tom Sawyer ever leave his adventures behind and become civilized?**

## Vocabulary

**Key Story Words** Twain’s story is mostly told in simple language and lively dialect. However, it also contains sophisticated vocabulary that is central to understanding the plot as well as Tom’s character. Encourage students to use context clues and to check definitions as they read. Ask them to add unfamiliar words they encounter to the list of key story words below.

Use **Resource #1: Vocabulary Cards** on page 7 and distribute copies to students.

contemplate (p. 10)	inspiration (p. 11)
expedition (p. 20)	dismal (p. 34)
rendezvous (p. 125)	intolerable (p. 179)
vengeance (p. 192)	repentance (p. 192)

## As You Read

### Reading the Book

**Shared Reading** Read the first chapter or the first few pages of the book with students, using enlarged text projected on a screen. Help students become familiar with the structure of the novel—dialogue interspersed with narrative—and the somewhat old-fashioned language and references of the period. Answer students’ questions and clarify comprehension issues, as necessary.

**Independent Reading** Assign students to read the book independently. Point out that the chapter titles serve as summaries of the action to come. Encourage students to read with partners to ask questions, discuss responses, and support each other’s comprehension.

### Comprehension Focus

**Analyze Theme** *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is an engaging narrative that is sometimes read simply as an adventure story, but also contains important themes. Guide students to investigate the theme of the book—the message about life or society that Twain is giving the reader through his character’s

actions and ideas. Twain was a critic of the society of his time and found much hypocrisy and injustice in “civilization.” In Tom and Huck, on the other hand, he portrays the unrepressed, natural joy of youth that is unhindered by society’s rules and confines.

Students should think deeply about the themes of the book for themselves and decide what message the book gives them. Most importantly, ask students to support their interpretation of the theme with specific evidence from the text.

Use **Resource #2: Analyze Theme** to support students in examining the themes in Tom Sawyer. Ask them to answer the questions on the resource as they read and discuss their responses with a partner. When they have finished the book, ask them to state the theme of the book in one or two sentences. Guide a discussion about theme with the group, encouraging students to offer their answers and their evidence from the book.

## After You Read

### Questions to Discuss

Lead students in a discussion of these focus story elements.

**1. Genre Focus: Classic Novel** Why do you think *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* has become a classic American novel? Do you think it still speaks to young people of your generation? Explain how. (*Answers will vary.*)

**2. Analyze Theme** How did Mark Twain feel about the way young people of his day were forced to be civilized? What do you think Mark Twain would think of the way young people live today? (*Sample answer: He glorified the freedom of youth, but also seemed to think that civilization was inevitable for Tom.*)

**3. Key Story Words** What sorts of things did Tom Sawyer find intolerable? What was something he did after getting an inspiration? (*Sample answers: Tom found church and school intolerable. He ran off to camp out after getting an inspiration to do it.*)

### Questions to Share

Encourage students to share their responses with a partner or small group.

**1. Text to Self** Which character in the book are you most like? Explain why you think so.

**2. Text to World** Mark Twain was a critic of the injustices of his society. What do you think he would criticize about American society today?

**3. Text to Text** Tom Sawyer is an adventurous, mischievous boy who doesn’t pay much attention to the restrictions of society. What other book or movie characters do you know who share a personality similar to Tom’s?

## WORDS TO KNOW

### Key Story Words

Ask students to refer to the definitions written on their vocabulary cards to answer each question below. The questions require them to apply the meaning of the words to their own experiences.

1. What is an experience that you find **intolerable**?
2. What would a **dismal** day look like?
3. Describe an **expedition** that you have gone on.
4. Give an example from the news of **vengeance**.
5. Where have you had a **rendezvous** with someone?

Challenge students to come up with their own questions using the vocabulary words to ask and answer with a partner.

## Extension Activities

### Reading/Writing Connection

**Literary Analysis** Have students write a short essay of literary analysis about one of Mark Twain’s famous quotes. Ask them to analyze the lessons about life Twain is discussing. Then tell students to state whether they think Twain is right or wrong based on their own experiences. Provide students with the following Twain quotes or encourage them to write about a Twain quote they choose themselves.

1. “Always tell the truth; then you don’t have to remember anything.”
2. “Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.”
3. “Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear.”

Don't forget the



### BIG QUESTION

**Critical Thinking** Give each student an opportunity to answer the big question. Encourage students to support their answers with details and evidence from the text. Tell them there is no one right answer.

**Will Tom Sawyer ever leave his adventures behind and become civilized?**

## Content Area Connections

**Science** **Mark Twain and Halley’s Comet** Challenge students to research the following question: What do Mark Twain and Halley’s Comet have in common? Ask them to report back to the class on what the noted author shares with the comet and what Twain himself had to say about it.

**Geography** **Adventure Caves** Challenge interested students to learn more about limestone caves like the one that Tom and Becky became lost in. Guide students to find out more information on Mammoth Cave, the largest cave system in the United States by visiting the Mammoth Cave website at: <http://1.usa.gov/X7Czpl>. Students can also explore Lechuguilla Cave, one of the most magnificently decorated caverns in the Americas, by visiting the NOVA website: <http://to.pbs.org/ZsLbFV>. Invite students to present their research results to the rest of the group, using formal English and speaking at an appropriate pace.

**Social Studies** **Mark Twain’s World** Encourage students to learn more about another part of Mark Twain’s world, such as the time he spent piloting a Mississippi riverboat or the time he spent “roughing it” in the West. Guide students to find information, text, and visuals about Twain’s

life, by visiting the website: <http://to.pbs.org/UoDiLL>. Suggest to students that they present the results of their research with photos, drawings, and other visuals.

**Arts** **Movie and Musical** Interested students can watch one of the film versions of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* or listen to the soundtrack of the musical based on the book. Encourage students to compare the movie or musical version with the book itself. Suggest students cast a contemporary film version of the book using their favorite actors and actresses of today.

### BIG ACTIVITY

**The Adventures of You** Remind students that *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* is based on the real experiences of Twain and his boyhood friends. Twain summarizes these adventures in his Table of Contents to the book. Tell students that they will be creating a Table of Contents for a book about their own life adventures. Pass out the **Big Activity: The Adventures of You** to students and clarify the steps of the activity.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **BIG ACTIVITY:** The Adventures of You

Fill your name into the title of the book. Then choose ten adventures from your life and describe them in the ten chapter heads of the Table of Contents.

**The Adventures of** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 3:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Chapter 4:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Chapter 5:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Chapter 6:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Chapter 7:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**Chapter 8:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 9:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Chapter 10:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# READ MORE AND LEARN MORE

Use these books and other resources to expand your students' study of the book or theme.

## Genre Connections



### Pride and Prejudice

Jane Austen

**Ages:** 14+

**Lexile Measure®:** 1100L

**Grades:** 9–10

**Pages:** 368

Elizabeth Bennet is one of five unmarried sisters; and, consequently, her family is visited by a constant parade of often unsuitable suitors. Mr. Darcy is the richest and handsomest of all, but he is also the most conceited. His battle of wits with Elizabeth makes this comedy of manners one of the best-loved English-language novels of all time and the most widely read of all of Austen's works.

**Available as a Storia e-book**



### The Hunger Games

Suzanne Collins

**Ages:** 13+

**Lexile Measure®:** 810L

**Grades:** 7–12

**Pages:** 384

**Guided Reading Level:** Z

In the ruins of a place once known as North America, Katniss Everdeen is focused on one thing: survival. Born into the poorest district, she is the sole provider for herself and her family. But when she is forced to participate in the Hunger Games, a yearly event in which two teens from every district must fight to the death on live TV, she is no longer just the hunter; she is the hunted. With her entire country watching, Katniss must decide if she is willing to survive no matter the cost or if there is another possible outcome to this bloody game. **Available as a Storia e-book**



### Geronimo

Joseph Bruchac

**Ages:** 12–15

**Lexile Measure®:** 900L

**Grades:** 7–10

**Pages:** 368

**Guided Reading Level:** Y

This compelling historical novel offers a new and more human perspective of the legendary Apache warrior, Geronimo, presented by Geronimo's fictional adopted grandson, Little Foot. Beginning in 1886 with Geronimo's final surrender, Little Foot retells the story of Geronimo's life and paints a picture of a man who was true to his family, had a great sense of humor, and was an enterprising businessman. This book is packed with accurate historical information, but will also appeal to young readers as an exciting tale of courage and sacrifice. **Available as a Storia e-book**

## Theme Connections



### Desperate Journey

Jim Murphy

**Ages:** 10–13

**Lexile Measure®:** 880L

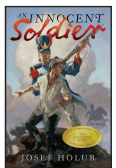
**Grades:** 5–7

**Pages:** 288

**Guided Reading Level:** V

It's 1848, and times are tough along the banks of upstate New York's Erie Canal. 12-year-old Maggie and her Irish immigrant family spend their lives hauling cargo. Maggie's father lost the family's entire savings, and now they're in danger of having their boat seized. Can Maggie overcome the odds to save their boat—and their family?

**Available as a Storia e-book**



### An Innocent Soldier

Josef Holub

**Ages:** 13–15

**Lexile Measure®:** 640L

**Grades:** 8–10

**Pages:** 256

**Guided Reading Level:** U

Adam is a 16-year-old orphan and servant whose master has forced him to sign up for Napoleon's Grande Armée. Adam is deeply traumatized by life on the battlefield and contemplates desertion. But everything changes for him when a wealthy lieutenant named Konrad Klara offers him a position as his personal assistant. Through his strong friendship with Konrad, Adam's life and outlook improve, and he transforms into the courageous soldier. **Available as a Storia e-book**



### Phantoms in the Snow

Kathleen Benner Duble

**Ages:** 13–16

**Lexile Measure®:** 710L

**Grades:** 7–10

**Pages:** 240

The year is 1944, and 15-year-old Noah Garrett's parents died from smallpox. He's sent to Camp Hale, Colorado, to live with an uncle he has never met. There's just one problem: Noah is a pacifist, and Camp Hale is a U. S. military base for a division of winter warfare soldiers called Phantoms. How can a boy who doesn't believe in war survive among these soldiers? **Available as a Storia e-book**



### Griffin's Castle

Jennie Nimmo

**Ages:** 10–13

**Lexile Measure®:** 780L

**Grades:** 3–8

**Pages:** 288

The animal figures are just stone carvings, aren't they? The decorations—called griffins—are on a wall that separates Dinah's new home from the street. Desperate for friendship and security, Dinah makes a wish for the animal carvings to come to life and be her protectors. But when her wish is granted, she wonders—will these sculptured creatures be her friends . . . or foes? **Available as a Storia e-book**

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<http://teacher.scholastic.com/ereading-resources/>

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## RESOURCE #2: Analyze Theme

Answer these questions as you read to analyze the theme of the book. Give evidence from the text to support each of your answers.

### CHAPTERS 1-5

1. Describe Tom Sawyer's character. What things are most important to him? How does he treat other people?

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### CHAPTERS 11-15

3. How does Twain describe the boys' adventures camping out? How do the adventures compare to their experiences in school? How does Twain seem to feel about nature and civilization?

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### CHAPTERS 21-25

5. What conflicts does Tom feel about telling the truth about the murder? What finally wins out for him?

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### CHAPTERS 31-35

7. How does Tom behave in the cave? What does Tom tell Huck he must do before they become robbers together?

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### CHAPTERS 6-10

2. How do Tom and Huck feel about what they witness in the graveyard? What choices do they have to make?

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### CHAPTERS 16-20

4. How does Tom surprise Aunt Polly? Why do you think he takes the schoolmaster's punishment in Becky's place?

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### CHAPTERS 26-30

6. What new trouble does Tom and Huck get into? What good deeds do they do?

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8. What is a lesson or message about life in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*?

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